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Forest Service NEWS



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NATIONAL FOREST FISH HABITAT IMPROVEMENTS PLANNED FOR '86

The release of \$700,000 to implement a salmon and steelhead rearing habitat enhancement program has been announced by Tom Coston, Regional Forester, USDA Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Region. Coston said another \$500,000 is anticipated from Bonneville Power Administration under the Public Power Council's Columbia River Basin fish and wildlife program.

"Juvenile salmon winter in areas adjacent to where they were spawned before beginning their journey to the ocean," Coston said. "Thus, conditions in the rearing areas directly affect the survival of the juveniles and the size of future fish runs."

The current program begins in the shadow of an ongoing conflict between recreational and commercial fisheries, a conflict that had its roots in diminishing fish stocks. Each year the Pacific Fishery Management Council sets a limit on the salmon catch and divides it between recreational and commercial fishermen.

The low limits of recent years have led to short recreational seasons, and this has led to an uproar from sportsmen, charter boat operators and

(more)

Fish habitat improvements-2-2-2

tourist-related businesses. And commercial fishermen have suffered too. The answer is more fish.

About 75 percent of the Coho salmon stock originates in hatcheries while naturally-spawned salmon face continuing difficulties. From this comes the incentive to enhance both spawning and rearing habitat far into the National Forests where many wild salmon originate.

"The money available this year will be key in carrying out the objectives of our 5-year habitat improvement program," Coston said. For example, on the Willamette National Forest, biologists intend to place logs and boulders in Still Creek to construct channel rearing pools for wintering Steelhead and Coho. On the Umpqua National Forest, a similar project is planned on Steamboat Creek off the North Umpqua River, and on the Gifford Pinchot National Forest, the Wind River is seen as a productive place to start habitat improvement efforts.

On the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, a two-pronged attack is proposed, according to Jim Doyle, Forest Fish Biologist. Log and boulder structures will be placed in the Miller River to improve spawning habitat. But on Hyachuck Creek in the Darrington Ranger District, heavy machinery will be used to create rearing pools of up to an acre adjacent to the stream.

"The hatchery program now operated by the states will continue to provide fish for many happy fishermen, but the habitat enhancement work on the National Forests will expand the wild salmon and steelhead runs," Coston added.

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